

**ALASKA TEAMSTER-EMPLOYER WELFARE TRUST
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
July 16, 2010**

Member name: Justin Olsen
Patient: Justin Olsen

APPEAL:

Justin Olsen is appealing the staff's denial of arthroplasty of TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint) with prosthetic joint replacement surgery.

BASIS OF DENIAL:

Mr. Olsen would like the Administrative Committee to consider granting an authorization and cover the arthroplasty with prosthetic joint replacement surgery.

Qualis Health performed the initial review. Based on the review of the clinical information submitted, the physician reviewer had advised that the documentation did not support the medical necessity to approve the surgery. The following clinical information was missing and not provided for the review: 1) X-ray documentation of arthritis and 2) documentation of failure of conservative therapy. The attending physician was given the opportunity to discuss this with Qualis Health's medical peer consultant.

The initial denial was appealed and Qualis Health upheld their original denial. The appeal review was completed by a Qualis Health medical peer consultant with same or similar specialty as the attending physician. After review of the clinical information submitted, Qualis Health's Oromaxillofacial peer consultant advised the proposed procedure cannot be approved because symptoms described did not indicate the need for a total joint replacement which would have a high risk of not addressing the patient's complaint of pain.

Under Section 9.7, *Exclusions and Limitations*, item #19, of the Alaska Teamster- Employer Welfare Trust's Summary Plan Description, it states, in part;

Services for the diagnosis or treatment of temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction, and any other craniomandibular disorder or other conditions of the joint linking the jawbone and skull, including ridge augmentation.

Comments:

At the time the request for benefits was received the Welfare Trust had been denying all requests for TMJ. The plan language was ambiguous under Section 5.15, *Professional Services and Supplies*, item #11. The second bullet, under item# 11, states "Covered Dental Expenses related to charges from a dentist (DDS or DMD) or oral surgeon are paid under the dental care benefit." Therefore, our interpretation of the plan language was that TMJ surgery was not a Covered Expense.

After speaking with the Plan's consultant, Jack Loos, regarding the plan language, he suggested TMJ should be covered and surgical procedures for TMJ should be sent to Qualis Health for review of medical necessity. Unbeknownst to the Plan, a review request for the TMJ surgery had already been sent to Qualis Health by Larry M. Wolford, DMD's office. The Trust staff sent Qualis Health the records on file along with a request for pre-certification. Qualis did an appeal review of the records and upheld the original denial.

This is a complete record of radiographs and charts notes.

Mr. Olsen would like telephonically present his appeal to the Administrative Committee.

Copies Enclosed: 5